

Thomas J. Galbraith to the Editor of the Saint Paul Daily Press September 12, 1862. [St. Paul] Pioneer and Democrat 14 September, 1862, p. 2.

Letter from Major T.J. Galbraith

From the St. Paul Press Saturday

St. Paul September 12, 1862

To the Editor of the Saint Paul Daily Press

In the Saint Paul Daily Press of this morning there is an editorial article headed "The Question of Responsibility," in which occurs the sentence following: "You raise the question, Mr. Agent, answer it;" and "Who then is responsible? You have raised the question, Mr. Agent, answer it now if you dare;" and "The Indian Agents through the organ which they have subsidized to represent them and other *attaches* of Cyrus Aldrich, have chosen to raise the question of official responsibility in connection with the outbreak of the Sioux. They have dared to raise the question, now let them answer it."

Now, who the Indian *Agents* and other *attaches* of Cyrus Aldrich are I do not know. But I do know who "Mr. Agent" is. It is my humble self, and I "*dare*" answer it.

In the first place, then, I never through any newspaper, or "organ," or otherwise, raised the Question of Responsibility above referred to; not have I any connection, direct or indirect, with any "organ" or any such question; nor had I any knowledge in regard to said Question of Responsibility whatever.

I, therefore, as far as I am concerned, pronounce the above quoted paragraph purely and simply imaginary and false, and the writers and dictators of them calumniators and falsifiers.

In the same article occurs the following: "families perished from starvation, cold and hunger, and inhuman neglect, while Indian traders and officials were growing fat and insolent on the spoils pillaged from the Indian."

Indian "families" are of course intended above.

As to Indian traders and other officials I have nothing to say. *They* can do their own business. As far as the paragraph quoted refers to me it is simply and purely false.

I assert this, and that too without subsidizing, or even consulting with anyone, that I can prove that never at any time in their history have the Sioux of the Mississippi been better supplied with provisions, clothing, implements, seeds and aids to plant than during my administration; never have their crops promised as well, and never has an agent of theirs attended more exclusively and faithfully to their wants. I never forgot or neglected the words of my charge. To their interest and welfare every nerve was strained and devoted. For the truth of this, and more, I refer to every man and woman who possesses personal knowledge of the facts.

For my conduct as Sioux Agent, I am responsible to the people of the State and country, and to the Government of the United States; and from that responsibility I have no desire to shirk.

I invite the fullest and strictest investigation of my every act and deed in connection with the Agency, and I pledge myself that I shall never “subsidize” the committee or commission which I hope will soon investigate my conduct as a public official. I shall patiently abide the result without either fear or trembling.

Your whole article appears to be a labored justification of the atrocities of the savages, coupled with a sort of covert defense of somebody whom it would seem I have been in, or through my “organ” charged with being the cause of the terrible Indian outbreak. As I have said, I again reiterate that I never charged anybody with being the cause of the outbreak, nor would I.

There is not only a *cause*, but there are *causes*; and nothing but a searching, candid, and faithful investigation can develop these causes. Let that investigation come, and I shall ask that it be thorough and radical — that it commence with the Treaties of 1851 and be conducted, step by step, up to the present time, and then, if myself or anybody else is guilty, let an indignant people hang the guilty villain or villains, be they whom they may.

Again this sentence occurs: “Not till a disturbance had already broken out at Yellow Medicine did they ask for an increase in force.” And then this: “It was sent them —every soldier there was, though it left Fort Ripley without a guard.”

This is news to me. When was this, and how many soldiers were sent? This foggy, very, and needs some details. Shall the indignant and outraged public have them? On the 16th day of August, 1862, and after he had advice of the difficulties at the Agency direct from me, Commissioner Dole made the following requisition on Governor Ramsey:

Office Superintendent of Indian Affairs

St. Paul, August 16, 1862

Sir: I have to request that you order three hundred troops to report to Thomas J. Galbraith, United States Indian Agent, at Yellow Medicine, at once, to preserve order and guard Government funds at that place.

Very Respectfully your obedient servant,

William P. Dole

Commissioner of Indian Affairs

To Hon. Alexander Ramsey, Gov. of Minnesota

And I am reliably informed that prior to that time, the Commissioner and Superintendent both requested the Governor to send troops to the Sioux Agency. Were any troops sent? If so, when and where from?

Again this course: “he even sent away the force on the ground that their services were not needed.” Now “he” is intended to mean me. I never “sent” away the force. Capt. Marsh, as brave and good a man and soldier as ever lived, requested of me leave to take his command back to the fort, for reasons which he then gave me. I consented, and he promised me that in any case difficulty arose he would be on hand. This promise he carried out and sealed with his blood. Enough of this now; I feel deeply that noble, brave man’s loss.

Again the impression is laboredly endeavored to be created upon the public mind that “Mr. Agent” has said in his “organ” that he “foresaw” the outbreak. This is another falsehood, and base and mean. What! Leave my wife and family, all that I love and now own upon the earth if I “foresaw” the coming storm. None but an *incarnate fiend* — *a dirty beast* — would ever suggest the like.

From the M’dawakantons and Wahpe Kutes, or Lower Sioux, I never feared anything worse than horse stealing and a Chippewa war party. I never even dreamed of these Lower Sioux, who had so long mingled with the whites and who were so well provided for in every respect, breaking out and murdering and mutilating their white neighbors.

Ever since I have been Agent, I have feared an outbreak of the Sissetons, urged on by the Yanktonais and Cut Heads. Both my predecessor and myself warned the Department of Indian Affairs of this, and urged that troops be stationed at Yellow Medicine. We got none. My action in regard to taking precaution in this matter is on file and will speak for itself when called for.

The article in your paper raises a false issue — entirely misrepresents me, and everyone connected with the matter as far as I know. My complaint against Governor Ramsey is not that he was the *cause* of the war, but that he has universally discounted the very idea of sufficiently garrisoning our frontier posts, and that he treated the dispatches of myself and others, which conveyed to him the news of the outbreak, with *lightness* and without any regard or respect for those who officially sent them to him. My information in this respects I obtained through the messengers who carried the dispatches, and others. I have freely expressed my opinion of his conduct. If I have been misinformed, I shall be happy to know it, and thrice happy to do simple justice to Governor Ramsey, or any other man. If the Governor from the start had treated this matter with the seriousness which it demands, I, as well as many others, will be glad to know it.

As to daring and *bantering* me through an “organ” or otherwise, it is simply useless. If I am the guilty man, an investigation will fix my guilt, and I shall be deservedly punished.

For my acts as Sioux Agent, I alone am responsible; and I ask no favor from Cyrus Aldrich, Alexander Ramsey, or any “organ” — none of them own me, or ever can. I rest my case on its merits, and am willing to abide the results; and whatever charges are preferred against me for official misconduct, I shall let the facts take care of me. When I think I should, and when I see fit, I shall speak; and when I want to write or have anything written, I shall do it myself, and subsidize no “organ” to do it for me.

I want a full investigation, and perhaps the public may find out who has grown “*fat and insolent on the spoils pillaged from the Indians.*”

I preserve one copy, send another to the Pioneer and Democrat, and request you publish this.

Thos. J. Galbraith
Sioux Agent